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Helms and Moynihan

At a Tuesday hearing of the Senate Intelligence Committee, former CIA Director Richard Helms and New York's Democratic Senator Daniel Moynihan spoke eloquently and candidly about the consequences of the continuing assault on the nation's intelligence community.

Hear Helms:

He said that because of legislative and executive branch investigations of the CIA, the agency is "hemorrhaging" with leaks of its secrets. "If it continues, this country is going to be at a serious disadvantage. The Russians are putting things into place. This is a time when our intelligence can't possibly be too good and when we can't have enough of it. To coin a phrase, we're certainly fiddling while Rome burns."

And he told the committee that its members are "attacking the problem of dealing with the intelligence community in a way that seems to raise more difficulties than it resolves."

Hear Senator Moynihan:

"Under the pretense of reorganizing the CIA, we are making it impossible to do what it was created for" — i.e., "being aggressively anti-Soviet."

Lest we forget, "the Soviets are powerful and persistent and ambitious, they are prepared to commit substantial resources to their undertakings, [and] they are prepared to deal ruthlessly with those who stand in their way."

Moynihan described himself as greatly concerned about (a) the "massive" spying on Americans by the KGB — the Soviet secret police, and (b) the lack of citizen indignation regarding that KGB spying. He predicted a bleak day of reckoning. "God, we will have a lot to explain. It will not be a happy occasion.... I fear the consequences for American Liberalism."

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Two views — both of them by individuals in positions to know the truth, and neither of them comforting.